Guide to Solidarity for F-1/J-1 Status - January 2024

By Middlebury College International Student Organization (midd.iso)

Introduction

In response to the recent hate crime that occurred in our state, whose aftermath continues to threaten our community of international students, here is a guide we compiled together for you to support international peace safely.

For students participating in the January 13 March, we wish you the best of luck, stay safe, and hope that this guide can be helpful to you. For students who decided to support the cease-fire in other forms, you might also find this guide helpful for future participation in rallies and protests.

There isn't a single way to support international peace, and there is no pressure to participate in any particular form unless you are comfortable with it.

** This guide is adapted from Williams College ISA Guide to Solidarity and online sources.*

In-person Safety When Attending Protests and Rallies On- or Off-Campus

Can you participate in protests and rallies while on F-1 Visa? - Yes. People in the U.S. with any immigration status have the right to protest, including F1 visa holders.

- Do not go alone and make sure you can exit quickly in case of an escalation. Make sure someone else knows where you are at all times.
- Wear facial coverings. Wear clothes that do not stand out and cannot be easily identified.
- Do not publicly post photos of yourself or others at protests without consent. Do not take photos of people's faces. Blur faces if the photos have to be posted.

Encounter with Law Enforcement

If you are stopped by law enforcement:

- Stay calm and don't resist or do anything that will obstruct the officer, even if you believe your rights are being violated. Keep your hands where the police can see them. Don't lie about your status or provide false documents.

Some of your rights F-1 visa holder include:

- Remaining silent. You are not obligated to discuss your immigration or citizenship status with police, immigration agents, or other officials. Anything you tell an officer can later be used against

you in immigration court. (However, in some states, including Vermont, you are obligated to identify yourself.)
- If you are not a US citizen and an immigration agent requests your immigration papers, you must show them if you have them with you.
- You have the right to say no if an immigration agent asks if they can search you. Agents do not have the right to search you or your belongings without your consent or probable cause.
- If you're over 18, carry your papers with you at all times. If you don't have them, tell the officer that you want to remain silent, or that you want to consult a lawyer before answering any questions.

In Vermont:

Tit. 24, §1983 **Identification to law enforcement officers required.**

- (a) A law enforcement officer is authorized to detain a person if:
  - (1) the officer has reasonable grounds to believe the person has violated a municipal ordinance; and
  - (2) the person refuses to identify himself or herself satisfactorily to the officer when requested by the officer.
- (b) The person may be detained only until the person identifies himself or herself satisfactorily to the officer or is properly identified. If the officer is unable to obtain the identification information, the person shall forthwith be brought before a Criminal Division of the Superior Court judge for that purpose. A person who refuses to identify himself or herself to the court on request shall immediately and without service of an order on the person be subject to civil contempt proceedings pursuant to 12 V.S.A. § 122. (Added 1997, No. 122 (Adj. Sess.), § 2; amended 2009, No. 154 (Adj. Sess.), § 238; 2013, No. 194 (Adj. Sess.), § 14, eff. June 17, 2014.)

Digital Safety and Avoid Doxxing

Doxxing happens when a person's privacy, personal information, and identity are intentionally searched, collected, and publicly shared without consent. This can result in threats to personal safety and potentially immigration status.

This can be especially relevant due to the rally/protest's sensitivity and sharing materials online. Even if you are a U.S. citizen, mishandling sensitive materials such as photos, videos, and written entries that include non-U.S. citizen's personal information can impose danger to physical and verbal harassment and violence on them.

While doxxing can occur and has already occurred under the current context, and there is no federal law that explicitly addresses doxxing as illegal, some measures can be taken beforehand to avoid doxxing and minimize its consequences. (Source @idontwannagetdoxxed; these recommendations do not constitute legal advice.)

Emailing Representative, Signing Petitions, etc:

- Use encrypted email (e.g. Protonmail)
- Use Alias, including name, email, phone number.

Calling Reps, Phonebanking, etc:

- Use a separate virtual phone number (e.g. Google Voice)

On Social Media:

- Cover/blur faces and identifiable information.
- Double-check photos/videos and gain consent from people before posting. Make your accounts private and untag yourself from photos.
- Remove your name, school, residence, etc. from bios.

Going Through Customs:

- Delete sensitive downloads/chats/etc. before going through U.S. customs when crossing borders.

If doxxing occurs on campus and you feel threatened, you can report their violation to the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Office through the Bias Incident Report.

Calling and Emailing VT Representatives

Congressional Representatives are supposed to represent all people living in their district regardless of citizenship status. Therefore, F-1/J-1 students of Middlebury College have the right to contact VT representatives to demand a cease-fire.

- Senator Bernard “Bernie” Sanders: office 802-862-0697; contact form; fax 802-860-6370.
- Senator Peter Welch: office 802-863-2525; email form; fax 202-228-7575.
- Rep. Becca Balint: office (802) 652-2450; fax; 771-200-5791; email BalintPress@mail.house.gov.

Access to Immigration Attorneys

Being arrested, charged, and convicted at a protest can affect your immigration status and future visa applications. You may want to identify an immigration attorney you can contact if needed.

Some online resources include:

Justia: Middlebury Immigration Lawyers

If any emergency happens, the ISO board is more than willing to help with contacting immigration attorneys and facilitate support from the College. In this case, you should also inform the International Students and Scholars Services (isss@middlebury.edu) as soon as possible.

Further Resources on Protest Rights

All you need to know when attending political protests on a F-1 visa
https://www.studuinternational.com/news/f-1-visa-holder-us-students/

American Civil Liberties Union
https://www.aclu.org/know-your-rights/immigrants-rights/#law-enforcement-asks-about-my-immigration-status

Immigrant Legal Resource Center
https://www.ilrc.org/red-cards

American Immigrant Lawyers' Association
https://www.aila.org/advo-media/tools/psas/know-your-rights-handouts-if-ice-visits

Protesting as an International Student in the US
https://blog.internationalstudent.com/2020/06/15/protesting-as-an-international-student-in-the-us

Your Rights While Protesting
https://www.cair.com/know_your_rights/your-rights-while-protesting

Campus Resources

If you are experiencing a threat to personal safety/ unsure about your immigration status/ would like to express your concerns:

- Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- International Student and Scholars Services
- Deans of students and class deans

Notes:

However, it is also important to acknowledge that the current U.S. laws can be appropriated against activities that calls for international peace:

> *Immigration and Nationality Act: "Any alien—who endorses or espouses terrorist activity or persuades others to endorse or espouse terrorist activity or supports a terrorist organization… is inadmissible."*

Engage and stay safe as you do. If modifications can be made or more information can be added to this guide, please contact us via email iso@middlebury.edu, or Instagram @midd.iso.

Stay updated:

- Palestinian Red Crescent
- Human Rights Watch: Israel-Palestine
- MiddleEastEye.net
- AlJazeera.com
- Palestinian Youth Movement
- Decolonizepalestine.com/reading-list/

On Instagram:

- @motaz_azaiza
- @byplestia
- @joegaza93
- @mohammedelkurd
- @gazagirl
- @jenanmatari
- @eye.on.palestine
- @theimeu
- @mondoweiss